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FOR

CHURCH-CHILDREN

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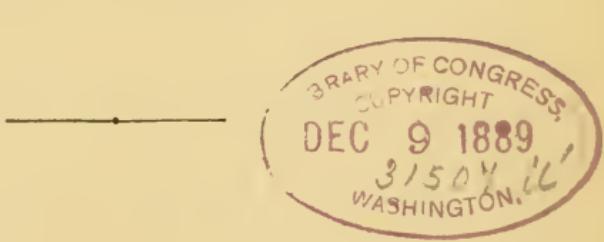
CHIMES

FOR

CHURCH-CHILDREN.

BY

MARGARET J. PRESTON.



PHILADELPHIA :

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TO
THE HAPPY MEMORY
OF
TWO LOVELY LITTLE SISTERS,
JEANIE AND NELLIE.

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CHIMES FOR CHURCH-CHILDREN.

THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE.

YOU have read the marvelous story
 Of what happened so long ago,
Away in the Rhenish country,
 In sight of the Alpine snow—

How thousands of little children,
 With scallop and staff in hand,
Like Peter-the-Hermit's pilgrims,
 Set forth for the Holy Land ?

With wonder they saw their fathers,
 For many and many a day,
From hamlet and town and castle,
 March to the East away.

They had watched while they girt their armor,
And followed, with sword and lance,
As Godfrey de Bouillon led them
Through the vineyards of sunny France,

By mountain and sea and forest,
Till, over the stormy wave,
With weeping, they hailed the border
Of the land they had come to save.

“And why do they go?” they questioned
Of the mothers, who sobbing said,
“They go to wrest from the pagan
The tomb where our Lord lay dead.”

And the thought in their young hearts kindled,
“Let us do as our fathers do:
Let us wear the cross on our shoulder,
And help in the conquest too!”

And so, on their strange, wild mission,
As the legend tells, they went;
But He who could never lead them
In the way He had not sent,

Lifted them up in his pity
(Misguided, and yet his own),
And, instead of the tomb they sought for,
Sent them to find his throne.

Now, what is the tender lesson
Wrapped up in the story so?
And what can we learn from the children
Who perished so long ago?

For the sepulchre's sake, where only
Three days the Redeemer lay,
They were willing to face such peril
As wasted their lives away.

For a temple that is eternal,
Where the living stones are piled—
Each stone of the wondrous building
The soul of a pagan child—

Are there ten thousand children
Willing to wear aright,
For Christ and his cause and kingdom,
The badge of the Red Cross knight—

Willing with prayers and offerings
To gather in one strong band,
And rescue the world, and make it,
Henceforward, all holy land?

YUSSEF'S REVENGE.

THE FIG-MERCHANT'S STORY.

YOU ask, O teacher, why I guard
With such a careful eye
This pile of stones? Sit on my mat,
And I will tell you why.

Three years ago—nay, scarce so much—
I, with my panniers full
Of early figs, one morning crossed
The mountain to Stamboul.

As up and down its gay bazaar
I pressed the crowds among,
I stopped to hear a Frank who taught
In mine own Turkish tongue.

He told of Jesus—Him of whom
I oft before had heard;
But never did my Korân seem
To hold so sweet a word

About our Prophet. On my ear
Fell it so strange, so new,
That I was moved to buy the book
And find if it were true.

So back unto my mountain-home
I bore it in my breast,
And read and read it till it brought
A wondrous inward rest.

I ceased to name the Prophet's name,
Cast my Korân away,
Nor heeded the muezzin's cry,
Nor spread my mat to pray.

My neighbors questioned of the change,
And watched with eyes askance;
And when I told them how it came,
I met their angry glance.

One day, as in my olive-yard
I toiled, they gathered round,
And, shrieking Allah's name, with stones
They felled me to the ground.

They left me breathless, bleeding, stunned,
As in their haste they fled,
Half hoping that the infidel
Who scorned the faith was dead.

But God their vengeful purpose crossed,
And spared, for Jesus' sake,
The life that in their bitter hate
They had essayed to take.

And when my senses came again,
With many a pain and groan
I gathered in the robe they rent
Each blood-bespattered stone,

And bore it in my bosom home,
That when there comes to be
Here built a Christian church some day,
As we shall surely see,

Within its deep foundation laid
Beneath this Islam sod
Each stone baptized in blood may be
A witness-stone for God.

Therefore, O teacher, wonder not
As with a curious eye
You see me guard these stones, since now
You know the reason why.

THE PITY OF IT.

HE stood at the open window,
His beautiful face and eye
Aglow in the blazing sunset
That crimsoned the western sky.

With something akin to worship
Transfigured he seemed to stand,
Like one of Correggio's angels,
A flower in his lifted hand.

Only six golden summers
Had darkened the boy's bright hair,
And yet he would thrill with wonder
At finding the world so fair.

As the flame of the sunset deepened
The flush on the mountain-tips
I heard an unconscious murmur
Ripple the parted lips:

“I wonder that God takes trouble
To paint such a splendid sky!
Not one of them cares to watch it—
Not one of these passers-by.

“Such color and light and beauty
So scattered and flung abroad,
Yet nobody turning to see it!
How sorry I feel for God!”

THE LEAK IN THE DYKE.

“ **Q**UICK! Go, Katrina! Seek the shore!
God grant that thou mayst see
Thy father’s boat all safe afloat
Upon the Zuyder Zee!

“ If there he be, then wave thy hands,
And shout with all thy might,
That he may know the rift doth show
Some widening over-night.

“ Bid him bring tackle, oars and sails,
All he and Hans can lift—
Oh, whatsoever they can find—
To stuff within the rift.

“ Haste, daughter! All I could, I’ve done:
And while thou art away
I’ll do the only thing that’s left—
I’ll watch the beach, and pray.

“ ’Twas but a trickling rill at first,
 But now it gaping stands,
And I can thrust within the crack
 Both of my outspread hands.”

Katrina sprung along the path,
 But, turning back, she said,
With voice that had a ring of cheer,
 And lifted eye and head,

“ Take courage, mother! God is great;
 He rules on sea and land,
And holds alway, by night and day,
 The waters in his hand.

“ I know that he hath power to keep
 The tide so swollen, down.
We are his children: dost thou think
 He means to let us drown?

“ Pray on, and I will shout my best;
 And by the time we’re back,
Somehow—O mother, I am sure—
 Somehow the leak will slack.”

Swift as a bird Katrina flew
Across the stretch of sand,
And found her father's fishing-smack
Scarce fifty yards from land.

Her hands upon her chubby cheeks
She pressed on either side,
And, loud and clear, her silvery voice
Went echoing o'er the tide.

The little craft was soon ashore:
They caught up spar and pike,
And on they rushed with breathless speed
To reach the broken dyke.

“Oh, Heinrich”—and the sobbing wife
Clasped tight her husband's arm—
“Thank God there's something stops the leak,
And we are safe from harm!

“A bit of broken mast, I think,
Swirled by the current swift,
Hath lodged against the sea-wall's side,
And so hath wedged the rift.”

Tired with her race, Katrina dropped
Upon the windmill stair;
“Nay, nay!” quoth she, half chidingly;
“*I* think it was *thy* *prayer.*”

A LESSON FROM THE STREET.

I PRESSED along the crowded street
One winter day,
Scarce conscious of the hurrying feet
That thronged the way,
When through the jarring, jangling noise,
And rush and glare,
Fell silvery soft a child's sweet voice:
“Why need I care?”

I turned to see whence came the words:
There met my eyes
A glance as clear as any bird's
That skims the skies.
“Ah, ruby lips,” I questioned, “may
A stranger dare
Ask wherefore to yourself you say,
‘Why need I care?’”

A little hand in mine she slid
With trustful gaze,
Threading as slowly as I did
The peopled ways:

“See! in the street my roses lie
All scattered there;
No wonder you should ask me why
I need not care.

“A jostling street-boy rudely shook
Them far and wide;
And when with angry word and look
I turned to chide,
I thought, ‘Why, we have flowers and flowers
At home as rare,’
For father says all his are ours;
So, *need* I care?”

“Ah, child,” I mused as I caressed
Her hand in mine,
“To one through wrack and loss oppressed,
Without design
You teach a lesson: from my grasp
Hard fortunes tear

Life's roses held with careless clasp,
But need *I* care?

“The rush of circumstance sweeps by,
And wrenches so
My treasures from my hand, and I
Will let them go,
Remembering that a home above
Awaits me, where
I'll find a Father's boundless love;
So, need *I* care?”

NOTHING TO DO.

I HAVE shot my arrows and spun my top
And bandied my last new ball;
I trundled my hoop till I had to stop,
And I swung till I got a fall;
I tumbled my books all out of the shelves
And hunted the pictures through;
I've flung them where they may sort themselves;
And now I have nothing to do.

The tower of Babel I built of blocks
Came down with a crash to the floor;
My train of cars ran over the rocks:
I'll warrant they'll run no more;
I've raced with Grip till I'm out of breath;
My slate is broken in two,
So I can't draw monkeys. I'm tired to death
Because I have nothing to do!

The boys have gone to the pond to fish;
They bothered me, too, to go,
But for fun like that I hadn't a wish,
For I think it's mighty slow
To sit all day at the end of a rod
For the sake of a minnow or two,
Or to land, at the farthest, an eel on the sod:
I'd rather have nothing to do.

Maria has gone to the woods for flowers,
And Lucy and Rose are away
After berries. I'm sure they've been out for
hours;
I wonder what makes them stay?
Ned wanted to saddle Brunette for me,
But riding is nothing new;
"I was thinking you'd relish a canter," said he,
"Because you had nothing to do."

I wish I was poor Jim Foster's son,
For he seems so happy and gay,
When his wood is chopped and his work all
done,
With his little half hour to play;

He neither has books nor top nor ball,
Yet he's singing the whole day through,
But then, he never is tired at all,
Because he has something to do!

THE UNRECORDED SMILE.

“**H**E wept.’ So saith the evangelist,
Of Him, the Holy, Undefiled,
Whom angels ’mid their chantings missed,
Amazed. None ever said, ‘He smiled.’

“Why should he? Smiles betoken joy;
But sin and woe and death sufficed
All mortal sweetness to destroy
Even for the human heart of Christ.

“He, for the bliss to be revealed,
Wrapped Godhead up in clay, and kept
Its light ineffable concealed,
The while he walked this earth and wept.”

Thus spake the preacher. Softly shy,
A child close-caught her mother’s hand,
Strong protest flashing in her eye,
Her lips apart with quick demand:

“Does not the Gospel clearly say—
Who reads St. Matthew’s page may see—
That little children left their play
To come and sit upon his knee?

“Would tears have drawn the happy child
If tears had made those features dim?
No, no! If Jesus had not smiled,
The children had not come to him.”

THE HAPPIEST CHRISTMAS.

'TWAS Christmas-tide. With tales and talk
That never seemed to tire,
The children, gay with holiday,
Sat round the blazing fire.

They told of many a prank and game,
And many a Christmas past,
And questioned me if this would be
As merry as the last.

"Of all your Christmas-times," I said,
"So rich in mirth and fun,
I beg that you each tell me true
Which was the happiest one."

Sweet Bessie turned her radiant face
With wondering gaze on me:
"My Christmas days have been always
As glad as glad could be."

Then merry Mabel shook her curls
Loose from the 'prisoning comb:
"Oh, mine was when papa and Ben
And you and Bess came home."

Ben chuckled: "'Twas the time I had
With crackers such a lark;
I popped and popped, and never stopped
From daylight until dark."

"That was the best," laughed Willoughby,
"Of any that I know,
When Roan and Bay upset the sleigh,
And drowned us in the snow.

"Such fun it was to see the girls,
And hear them shriek and shout—
To search and sift the ten-foot drift
Until we fished them out!"

"And I," lisped little Dimple-cheek,
A-tiptoe in her glee,
"Was happiest when I counted ten
Dolls on my Christmas tree."

The soft-eyed Sophie silent sat,
Nor yet had said a word,
Though I could see some memory
Her tender bosom stirred.

“What is it, darling?” and I kissed
The lids that veiled the blue;
“Tell me, I pray, what Christmas day
Brought greatest joy to you.”

The eyes she raised to mine were filmed
With something like a tear;
And sweet and low she answered, so
That I could scarcely hear:

“Last Christmas day, with all my gifts
Upon the window-seat,
I watched right long the merry throng
Of people in the street.

“And as I watched, there stood a group
Of ragged girls and boys
Before the pane, their eyes a-strain
With wonder at my toys.

“Poor little foreign wanderers!

My eyes began to fill:

I could not bear to see them there,
So sad and wan and chill.

“I swept my toys into my lap,

And, with a tap and call,

Opened the door and bade the four
Come to me in the hall.

“They held their aprons, stretched their hands;

And oh, it was a sight,

As out I poured my Christmas hoard,
To see their wild delight!

“Each Christmas, as it passed, has seemed

More happy than the rest,

But, of them all, I think I’d call
That one the very best.”

ST. THERESA'S HALF-PENCE.

IN a cell of her quiet cloister
Theresa, the novice, knelt,
And poured, in a mourn of sorrow,
The pitiful grief she felt.

For life, with its sharp seductions,
Its bitterness, toil and pain,
Its pleasures that seemed so mocking,
Its laughter that seemed so vain,—

Had sickened her heart with sadness,
And driven her forth to find
In the depth of the silent cloister,
That solace for which she pined.

But the thought of the poor and wretched,
The lost and erring, lay
Like a weight on her tender spirit,
That troubled her night and day.

“I sit in my blissful musings,
And prayerfully draw sweet breath,
While those I have left behind me
Are pressing their way to death.

“I dare not be happy, seeing
God’s mercy and wrath so braved;
I dare not in calm content me
That only *my* soul is saved.

“Yet what can I do to help them?
And where have I strength to win
Their hearts from the woes and sorrows,
Their feet from the paths of sin?

“And what can I give the weary
To lighten their burdens sore,
Since only a single half-pence
Is left of my home-brought store?

“Ah! nothing can *I* and a half-pence
Accomplish, however small—
Nay, nothing; but *God* and a half-pence
Can compass and conquer all!”

WINNING HIS SPURS.*

SCENE: Mount Vernon, A. D. 1796.

“WELL, since it is your birthday, boy,
And you are keen to know
If you may ride at Calvert’s side,
I give you leave to go.

“Fifteen to-day! ’Tis time, forsooth,
That you should act your part,
And take your place amid the chase,
And learn the hunter’s art.

“My Lady will be proud to see
Your dappled deerskin flung
Down in the hall, and on the wall
Your forest-trophies hung.

* An incident in the life of George Custis, the step-grandson of Washington.

“So saddle Blueskin,* for he paws
Impatient in the stall ;
But leave you—mind!—buckshot behind,
And load your gun with ball.

“Bring down the gray old stag that haunts
The ridge beyond the firs ;
And if you play the man to-day,
I think you’ll win your spurs.”

Off dashed the lad at Calvert’s side,
And soon the merry pack
Of hounds, set free, with frantic glee
Came yelping at his back.

For many an hour they beat the woods,
Till at the last they spied
The buck at feed amid the firs,
Close to the water’s side.

One moment, and with headlong leap
He cleared the grassy bank,
And nothing but his antlers’ tips
Could tell them where he sank.

* Washington’s favorite “hunter.”

The boy plunged after: Calvert gave
Too late the warning shout,
For horse and rider swam mid-stream,
And would not turn about.

The panting stag had scarcely set
His foot on solid ground,
Ere Blueskin, following at his heels,
Sprang forward with a bound.

The tossing antlers onward rushed,
Then, with a sudden start,
Sank; the young hunter's hand had sent
A bullet through his heart.

Mount Vernon's dinner-hour was near,
And noble guests were there,
Who gathered in a stately group
Around the General's chair.

In sprang the stripling: "Sir, the buck
Lies in the court-yard, dead!
Oh, such a splendid dappled skin,
And such an antlered head!"

“And Blueskin—never horse behaved
More gallantly before—
He swam with me across the bend,
Straight on from shore to shore!”

Close to his side the General drew
The lad: “What say you, sirs?—
And you, My Lady?—Has the boy
Not bravely won his spurs?”*

* The antlers of this stag hung for many years in the hall at Arlington.

THE FOUR RUPEES.

A GIFT has come to us over seas—
A gift of beautiful, bright rupees;
And who, do you think, has sent us these?

Was it one of the Rajahs, rich and grand,
Who live in that wonderful, far-off land—
The land of simoon and sun and sand?

Or was it some Brahmin who has thrown
For ever away his gods of stone,
And worships the Christians' God alone?

Or was it the Viceroy who controls
The destiny of those million souls
From Kyber to where the Hooghly rolls?

Nay, none of them all—nay, none of these—
Has sent this royalty of rupees
From that strange sun-land over seas.

Who was it, then ? Listen, and I will tell ;
For surely 'tis something to ponder well
Till the truth of it makes our bosoms swell.

'Twas an eight-year-old, brown-faced Hindu lad,
Made gift of the four rupees he had,
To help us at home ; for he was sad

Because he had heard his teachers' fear
That the work of the children over here
Might wane with the waning of the year.

And therefore he brought his four rupees,
And eagerly whispered, " Sahib, please
Send this for the work beyond the seas."

Christ save this orphan who of his store
Gave all to aid us, and may his four
Rupees increase to a thousand more !

THE FLOWERS THAT LAUGHED.

“I WENT to the garden this morning,”
Our darling of darlings said,
With a gurgle of rippling music
And a twitch of her flossy head :

“I went to the garden early
(The thing that I say is true);
The flowers were washing their faces
From buttercups filled with dew.

“The violets hardly had wakened;
The bluebells were ringing a tune;
The roses were leaning together
And telling each other, ‘It’s June!’

“The white of the lilies seemed whiter
Than ever I saw it before;
But the tulips were all in a fidget
Because there were bees at their core.

“The hollyhocks surely were angry,
So stiffly they stood, and so tall ;
For how could the breadth of such faces
Be washed in a basin so small?—

“When I came to the bed where the pansies
Were turning to meet the light,
I stood, and I watched them with wonder :
I never had seen such a sight.

“They laughed fit to kill themselves—laughing
And winking their eyes at me,
Till I thought they would die a-laughing ;
So I must go back and see.”

THE BOY'S GRAFTS.

“ FATHER, can you tell me why,
Though I graft from day to day,
Cutting carefully away
From the juicy slips, the wood,
Till I find it firm and good—
Why my grafts should wilt and die?

“ All my buds are fresh, I know ;
Rind and edge I smoothly pare,
Joining them with nicest care,
Winding closely, in and out,
With my ‘ bass ’ the wax about ;
Yet my scions do not grow.

“ See this stock of Muscadine,—
Well, I did my best to graft
Concord on it, though you laughed,

Saying that you didn't think
It could make me drunk to drink
All its future yield of wine.

“What's the matter? Tell me where
In my work I've gone astray;
Point me out a surer way
How the cleft and wedge to use,
How my cuttings best to choose,
How the hardier bark to pare.”

“Ay, my boy, your buds are set
Somewhat with a gardener's skill,
Which I praise you for; but still
There is other toil to add.
Don't you see your grafts have had
Not one drop of water yet?

“Look! the soil is parched and dry,
When it should be mellowed fine,
Round your stock of Muscadine;
When no moisture damps the root
To revive the drooping shoot,
Is it strange your buds should die?

“Here's a lesson, too: although
I may graft upon your youth
Living slips of heavenly truth,
If your heart-soil shows no trace
Of the softening dews of grace,
Then *my* graftings will not grow.”

THE CHILD JESUS.

ALL placid and lonely the village
Of Nazareth slept on the plain :
No husbandman toiled at the tillage
Nor reaped the ripe ears of the grain ;
No vine-dressers wrought at their labors
Nor passed with their pruning-hooks by :
The slopes were as silent as Tabor's,
And Tabor was still as the sky.

No voices of innocent riot
In market-place, hostel or hut ;
The hum of the craftsman was quiet,
The door of the synagogue shut.
No *alephs* and *beths* were heard swelling
From the school of the scribe by the wall,
And Joseph the carpenter's dwelling
Was hushed as the publican's stall.

'Twas the week of the Passover; only
The aged, the sickly, the blind,
The tottering children, and lonely
Young mothers had tarried behind.
To the sacredest feast of the nation,
Through the paths that their fathers had trod,
All others, with paschal oblation,
Had gone to the city of God.

And Mary, to every beholder
Her face toucht with wistfulest dole
(Remembering what Simeon had told her
Of the sword that should pierce through her
soul),
With faith yet too steadfast to falter,
Though sorely with mysteries tried,
'Midst the worshipers stood at the altar,
With Jesus the Child by her side.

The seven days' festival ended,
Rites finished for people and priest,
The throngs from the temple descended
And homeward set face from the feast.

And neighbor held converse with neighbor,
 Unwonted and simple and free,
As northward they journeyed toward Tabor,
 As westward they turned to the sea.

But not till the night-dews were falling
 Did Mary, oft questioning, find,
As children to children were calling,
 That Jesus had lingered behind.
He vex her—the mother that bore him?
 Or veiled it some portent or sign?
For oft had she trembled before him,
 Her human too near his Divine.

She sought 'midst her kinsfolk, whose pity
 Grew tender to look on her grief;
Then back through the streets of the city
 She hastened, yet found not relief.
Thus searching, a marvelous story
 Her ear and her senses beguiled:
“The rabbis, gray-bearded and hoary,
 In the temple are taught by a child.”

THE SILVER PLATE.

THEY passed it along from pew to pew,
And gathered the coins, now fast, now few,
That rattled upon it; and every time
Some eager fingers would drop a dime
On the silver plate with a silver sound,
A boy who sat in the aisle looked round
With a wistful face: "Oh, if only he
Had a dime to offer, how glad he'd be!"
He fumbled his pockets, but didn't dare
To hope he should find a penny there.

He had listened with wide-set, earnest eyes
As the minister, in a plaintive wise,
Had spoken of children all abroad
The world who had never heard of God—
Poor pitiful pagans who didn't know,
When they came to die, where their souls
would go,

And who shrieked with fear when their mothers made
Them kneel to an idol-god, afraid
He might eat them up, so fierce and wild
And horrid he seemed to the frightened child.

And the more the minister talked, the more
The boy's heart ached to its inner core;
And the nearer to him the silver plate
Kept coming, the harder seemed his fate
That he hadn't a penny (had that sufficed)
To give, that the heathen might hear of Christ.
As they offered the piled-up plate to *him*
He blushed and his eyes began to swim.

Then, bravely turning, as if he knew
There was nothing better that he could do,
He spoke in a voice that held a tear:
"Put the plate on the bench beside me here;"
And the plate was placed, for they thought he
meant
To empty his pockets of every cent.

But he stood straight up, and he softly put
Right square in the midst of the plate, his foot,
And said, with a sob controlled before,
“I will give *myself*: I have nothing more!”

KNIGHT RUPERT.

A CHRISTMAS MASQUE.

(Children singing a Christmas carol.)

GIVE it welcome! Give it cheer!
Chant it in with carols clear!

Happiest night of all the year—
Merry Christmas eve!

Gladdest night that ever came,
Night of nights we children claim,
In the blessed Christ-Child's name—
Holy Christmas eve.

Let us think with love and awe
Of the sight the shepherds saw—
Christ, a baby in the straw—
That first Christmas eve.

Christmas greetings, Christmas fare,
Be for his dear sake the share

Of all children everywhere
On this Christmas eve!

(*A Lady in an antique garb enters.*)

LADY.

Now that the Christmas bells have rung,
Now that your carol has been sung,
Off for the Yule-log! Drag it in
Out of the snow, where it has been
Waiting all day with cedars bound.
Quick! Let the curling blaze surround
Birch-trunk and bark. The Yule-night cheer
Cannot begin till the Yule-log's here.

(*Children bear in the log, singing.*)

Hearth-room for it—this new-comer,
Miser of the wealth of summer,
Rained on, blown on, shined on, snowed on,
Fit to grace the hall of Woden,
With the sap of many a winter
Making fragrant every splinter.
Hearth-room for it, till the racket
Underneath its birchen jacket

Tells us, snapping, sparkling, humming,
A new Christmas eve is coming!

(*Children pile the log in the fireplace.*)

LADY.

Go bring us the brand we laid away,
Kept from the log last Christmas day.
Is it heated aright till its centre glows
Like the flaming heart of an August rose?

(*Children shout in chorus.*)

Yes, yes! we lighted it. High and higher
It blazes now on the roaring fire!

LADY.

Haste, then, and bear the brand along
With clapping of hands, and dance and song.

(*Children bring in the branch and light the log,
singing.*)

Kindle, kindle, surely, slowly—
Kindle, kindle, with a holy

Christmas lustre intertwining,
Like the star of Bethlehem's shining.
Gayly, warmly, brightly, holy,
Kindle, Yule-log ! kindle slowly !

LADY.

And now, as the blaze leaps high and tall,
Be seated and watch it, one and all,
And quietly listen while we wait
Knight Rupert's approach. He keeps us late,
But then he has many a place to go,
And it's tiresome traveling thro' the snow.
“*Knight Rupert*”? You say you never heard
Of good Knight Rupert ? No, not a word ?
Why, darlings, if all his affairs go right,
I'll promise you'll see him here to-night.

CHILDREN.

But we want Santa Klaus ! Christmas cheer
Is spoiled if Santa Klaus is not here.

LADY.

Well, well, I'm bidden to tell you, dears,
Santa Klaus, who these dozen years

Has never forgotten you, has a call
To the other side of the world—that's all;
So he sends his brother instead, who'll be
As kind in his way, and as good, as he.
He hasn't, it's true, a team of deer,
But his seven-league boots will bring him here
Like a lightning-flash. And don't you know
(I told you the story long ago)
That he is a fairy-knight—the one
Who brings from the Land of the Midnight Sun
The beautiful Christmas trees, so bright,
With hundreds of candles all alight,
And the Christ-Child hovering sweet and fair
Above, like an angel in the air,
To keep us in mind that every joy,
From the greatest gifts to the smallest toy,
All the round of life from rim to rim,
Is guarded, bestowed and blest by him?

There's something I mustn't forget to say
About Knight Rupert: From Christmas day
Last year, till the hour the Yule-log glows
To-night, this magical being knows

What sort of a child you—every one—
Have been from the rise to the set of sun.
For you who were loving and good and true,
Oh, wonderful presents he brings to you ;
For you who were selfish and bad, you'll see,
There's nothing but *rods* on the Christmas tree.

Hark ! There is his step ! I'm sure I know
The sound as it crunches the frozen snow.
Stir the Yule-log up ! In a moment more
He will scrape his boots, and will fling the door
Wide open upon us. Now, girls and boys,
Be quiet : he doesn't like a noise ;
You mustn't so much as twirl your thumbs,
For fear of disturbing him. *Here he comes !*

(The door is flung back, and a snow-besprinkled, hooded old man with a wand in his hand, appears beside a lighted Christmas tree, over which floats suspended a waxen Christ-Child.)

AT A PERSIAN WELL.

SHE comes to the well for water,
 Her jar on her shoulder slung,
Just as the Eastern maidens
 Came when the world was young—
Just as the Hebrew Rachel
 Stood in the even-glow,
Poising her earthen pitcher,
 Three thousand years ago.

Her eyes have the misty softness
 Of the shadowy Persian hills,
And her laughter ripples over
 Her lips, as she stoops and fills
Her jar from the sparkling surface
 That her plashes all disturb,
As she draws from the depth her burden
 And swings it to the curb.

And lightly aloft she lifts it
As a trifle of childish play,
And steadies it on her shoulder,
And walks in her grace away
With a step as secure and stately,
With as lofty an air and mien,
As down through the golden story
Walks Esther, the Persian queen.

Does she know of the living Fountain,
This maiden of whom we tell?
Has she listened to Christ's sweet teachings
As she sits at the mouth of the well?
Does she ask with an eager longing,
As she hears of his holy law,
“Give me of this living water,
That I come not hither to draw”?

“The well is deep,” we answer;
“Yet ours is the crystal cup
Of sacred and steady effort
That shall bring the water up,

Till many a Persian maiden
The freshening draught shall drain
From a sweeter than Sychar's fountain,
And never shall thirst again."

A YOUNG AGASSIZ.

I'M tired of every sort of play,
And, as it's pleasant weather,
We'll go and spend our holiday—
The birds and I—together.

I'll sling my lunch-box on my back;
And when I've been the winner
Of specimens enough, I'll slack
My search, and eat my dinner.

There'll be so many nests to find,
If I can only see 'em,
And butterflies of every kind
To catch for my museum.

I'll wander up and down the brook
That through the woods is flowing,
And in the shadiest spots I'll look
If any ferns are growing.

And of such mussel-shells I'll come
To be the proud possessor
As well might strike with envy dumb
Some college-bred professor.

I'll hunt for trilobites with eyes,
Such as my biggest brother
Once found, and reckoned such a prize:
I can't have any other.

And when no specimen I've missed
Of treasures that would kindle
The zeal of any naturalist—
A Huxley or a Tyndale—

I'll lay my lunch-box on the grass,
And in the pleasant weather
The friendly birds and I will pass
The happy noon together,

And of my dinner (if I fall
Asleep before I'm through it)
Grasshoppers, birds, bees, squirrels—all—
May eat, and welcome to it.

A LAPLAND INTERIOR.

A PICTURE.

I.

DIDN'T you feel a sudden strain
Tug at your heart-strings like a pain
When you were standing all a-gaze,
One of those blissful autumn days,
Under a sky of cloudless blue,
Soaked with the sunshine through and through,
Looking with curious eyes, perhaps,
Over that group of fur-clad Lapps?
Didn't you feel, as you turned away,
Shadows were round you all the day,
Cast by their figures everywhere,
Making you sigh, "How sad they were!"
Just as if merriment, play-time, joy,
Never had come to them, girl or boy,
Living in pitiful patience so,
Poor "Little People of the Snow"?

II.

Weren't you sorry to think how few
Pleasures they have the whole year through—
You with your glad skies overhead,
They with their skies of sombre lead ;
You with your forests fresh and bright,
They with their pine-paths always white ;
You with your banks that the flowers emboss,
They with their lichens, cones and moss ;
You with your birds from all the climes,
They with their faint frost-tingled chimes ;*
You with your meadows grassy green,
They with their wastes of icy sheen ;
You with your brooks of silver hum,
They with their streamlets frozen dumb ;
You in your dear, sweet, warm home shut,
They in their huddled birch-bark hut ?
Is it so strange, then, they are sad,
Is it a wonder that you are glad—
Glad even while you whisper low,
Poor "Little People of the Snow" ?

*The traveler in Lapland constantly hears a fairy-like music made by the frost-crystals with which the air is filled.

THE SWALLOW'S MISTAKE.

I WAS watching the drip of the rain to-day.
From the eaves, as a swallow with shreds of
hay

Flew in, and I'm certain I heard him say

To the one in the nest, with his head aside,
And a gurgle of throat, and his bill set wide
(The pairing was over and she was a bride):

“ Our wedding-journey, I thought, my dear,
Would end where the skies were soft and clear,
For March was over and April here ;

“ So, under the myrtles, I believed
It was Spring in the North. I am sore deceived ;
And is it a wonder my heart is grieved ?

“ I pined for the apple-tree boughs so bright
Close under the eaves, with blossoms white,
Where, a fledgling, I crooned with young de-
light.

“Such a nest we would fashion and softly line,
Both working there under the golden shine,
So glad, for the nest would be yours and mine.

“A swallow’s vain dreaming! No leaves I see,
No pink in the buds on the apple tree.
If this is their April, what March must be!

“The showers are darkening the east and west;
The drizzle is wetting our half-lined nest,
And the damp wind ruffles your downy breast;

“The keen winds rustle and roar and sting;
Like bullets the raindrops pelt my wing:
What business has this to be called the Spring?

“Come! Let us go back where the sun has sway,
Where, hid in the myrtles, we’ll coo, and stay
Till April hands over the Spring to May.”

THE LITTLE STREET-MUSICIAN.

WRITTEN FOR A PICTURE.

I.

WEARY with wandering all day long,
Saddened with singing her homesick song,
Jostled about the crowded street,
Faint from the lack of food to eat,
Choked with the tears that will not let
Fall from her heavy lashes yet,
Strumming her small guitar to make
Music, until her fingers ache,—
Under the lamp-post now she lies,
Utterly weary, while her eyes
Suddenly droop in slumber deep.
Poor little tired one! let her sleep.

II.

Oft, as she trudges with her guitar,
Looking above to the sky so far,
Feeling all day the street's rude stir,
Never a pitiful glance for her—
Never a tender word of cheer
Dropt on the lonely exile's ear—
Doesn't she sometimes wish the blue
Only would open and let her through,
Flying away like a loosened bird
Up to the Father of whom she'd heard ?
Poor little tired one ! Never mind !
He will remember you : he is kind—
Kinder than any you ever meet
Toiling along the stony street.
Hark ! There are gentle voices now
Breathing above you ; on your brow
Somebody lays the softest touch :
Somebody pities you—oh how much !
Wake ! there's a sweet surprise in store ;
Wake ! you are never to wander more.

THE HERO OF THE GUN.

THE captain galloped to the front,
The foam upon his rein,
And as he urged his swerving steed
Across a pile of slain,

He hailed the gunner at his post:
“Ho, Fergus! Pour your shell
Straight in the face of yon stout line
That holds the height so well;

“And never slack your raking fire—
No, not to cool your gun;
For if we break those stubborn ranks,
I think the day is won.”

The gunner wiped his smoke-dimmed face:
“I’ll do the best I can,
And down—brave fellows though they be—
We’ll bring them, to a man!”—

“I’ll trust you for it!” Like a flash,
The captain turned and wheeled,
And with his sword above his head
Dashed backward to the field.

Fierce belched the cannon’s ceaseless fire
With deadly crash and din,
And, though the line still held the height,
Its ranks began to thin.

“Two rounds, and we will clear the hill!”
But, as the gunner spoke,
A sudden overwhelming storm
Of bullets o’er him broke.

And when the smoke had lifted, there,
Still straining all his powers,
They heard him shout: “Two shots, my boys,
And then the day is ours !

“No matter if one arm be gone,
I keep the other still ;
I promised I would do my best,
And so, you’ll see, *I will!*

“Let me make trial while my strength
Can do the duty set;
I tell you that this strong left hand
Is good for service yet!”

They primed the piece, and twice he sent,
With all too deadly aim,
The shells that mowed the broken line
And swept the hill with flame.

“*Where's Fergus?*” and the captain's horse
Came spurring into sight;
“*Where's Fergus?* Let him take my thanks:
His fire has won the fight!”

The dying gunner raised his head;
His lips were faintly stirred:
“Captain, I said I'd do my best,
And I have kept my word.”

WILLIE-WEE'S GRACE.

HE wasn't two years old, you see;
He couldn't utter well
A single word, this Willie-Wee,
Of whom I'm going to tell.

Yet if you gave him something good,
He always tried to say
His "*Thank you, ma'am,*" as best he could,
In pretty baby-way.

And, kneeling by his little bed
In gown of dainty white,
He shut his great blue eyes and said
"*Our Father*" every night.

One morning, when the bell for prayers
Had summoned all the house,
He glided down the nursery stairs
As softly as a mouse.

“Hi, honey! whah you gwine widout
 You’ hy’ar been smooven down?”
His mammy* cried. “The chile’s about
 Some mischief, I’ll be boun’.

“Come back dis minit, till I put
 You’ shoes an’ stockin’s on,”
She shouted down the passage, but
 The runaway was gone.

And to himself she heard him say,
 As muttering on he went,
“Papa away! Papa away!”
 And wondered what he meant.

Into the breakfast-room he pressed,
 Mounted his father’s chair,
And gravely waited till the rest
 Came in from morning prayer.

And when mamma and sisters three
 Had taken, each, her place,
And paused a moment, quietly,
 To say their silent “grace,”

*The appellation of Southern children for their nurses.

His head our Willie-Wee low bowed,
And, folding palm to palm,
Shut close his eyes, and said aloud,
“ *Our Fader, t'ank 'ou, ma'am.*”

THE PURITAN COW.

ON BOSTON COMMON. A. D. 1760.

THE dear little Lettice was sorrowful : word
Had come that Griselda ('twas Ralph who
had heard

The news on the Common)—Griselda was found
So trespassing that they had put her in pound;
Griselda, as patient and pretty a cow
As ever had eaten her hay from a mow.

“ To think,” exclaimed Lettice, “ how hurt she will
be !

For no one has tenderer feelings than she.
She always has held up her beautiful head
Right proudly, but now she will hang it in-
stead—

Come, Ralph ; let us go to her. Don’t you sup-
pose

I could soothe her a little by stroking her nose ?”

“ How just like a girl that is, Lettice ! I vow,
I thought her a very high-principled cow—
Above all such meanness as pasturing round
On other folks’ clover and getting in pound.
Her feelings indeed ! What *I’m* thinking about
Is how we can manage to bargain her out ;
The cost is ten shillings, and mother can spare
Ten shillings but illy enough. I declare,
Griselda, who ruminates often, I’m sure,
Forgets she’s the cow of a woman too poor
To be shelling out shillings. But let us go round
By the Common, and see if Griselda’s in pound.”

So Lettice and Ralph to the pound took their
way,
And found the town-crier a-raking his hay,
While patient Griselda looked over the wall,
Her feelings not seemingly wounded at all.
“ You see, sir,” said Lettice, a tear in her eye,
“ We thought that Griselda had principles high
As we who had raised her ; so what must we feel
To have it found out that Griselda will steal !
We brought her up like a Christian, and now
Who’d ever suppose her a Puritan cow ?

“ ‘Twas evil companionship! Minister Strong
Has a bridle who leads her in ways that are
wrong.

But please let her out, sir; you will not refuse
If instead of the shillings I leave you my
shoes?”—

“ That shall you not, Lettice; it would not be
fair”—

And Ralph stood up straight as a proud mil-
lionaire—

“ For mother would grieve, and that never would
do.

I’ve two pair, and what does a boy want with
two?”

The crier stopped raking his hay while he took
The key from his pocket, and, turning to look
At the children, said kindly, “ Nay, nay! I’ll be
bound

‘Tis the last time Griselda gets into the pound;
And, since you’re so good to your mother, *I’ll* pay
The cost, little master, with some of my hay.”

COUNTING THE PENNIES.

AH! what shall I do with my pennies?
For, see, I have such a store!
I never have sold my basket
Of walnuts so soon before.

How often I've trudged for hours,
And taken a secret cry
Because I was tired and hungry,
And nobody cared to buy!

I dreaded to think how mother
Would look as I came and said
That I hadn't enough of pennies
To bring her a loaf of bread—

How Nellie, my little sister,
Would watch at the door and say,
“I've thought and I've thought of the apple
You promised to bring, all day.”

But now I can fill my basket,
For there's never a nut behind—
One loaf, two loaves, and a dozen
Of apples the sweetest kind.

Five pennies—ten—fifteen—twenty—
And thirty—and thirty-five !
Just think of it ! Here are forty,
As sure as I'm alive !

It must have been God who helped me
To sell off my nuts so soon,
Or else I'd been trudging, trudging,
The whole of the afternoon.

And how I would like to thank him,
So kind he has been, so true !
I'll spare for his poorer children
A few of my pennies, too.

A FIDDLESTICK'S END.

WHEN I was a little one long ago,
As sure as I wanted to do or know
Some very absurd or silly thing,
My beautiful mother would laugh and sing,
“*A fiddlestick for my bandbox!*”

And once, when I came from school one day,
And sulked and pouted and wouldn’t play,
Because Rose Budd’s new ribbons were red
And mine were an autumn brown, she said,
“*A fiddlestick for my bandbox!*”

And when Tom fretted about his sum,
Declaring the answer would *never* come—
No, not if he ciphered the whole night through—
She patted his cheek, yet chaffed him too:
“*A fiddlestick for my bandbox!*”

And when wee Harry would sometimes cry
For another piece of the oyster-pie,
She neither would scold nor frown nor taunt,
But knuckle her eyes and sob, “*I want*
A fiddlestick for my bandbox!”

And if we would bring her tales from school—
How *this* or how *that one* broke the rule—
Before we were through our gossip half,
She was always sure to make us laugh
With “*Fiddlestick for my bandbox!*”

So now, when my roysterers come to me,
And clamor or pout around my knee,
I quietly bend each sturdy will
By singing the same old nonsense still:
“*A fiddlestick for my bandbox!*”

MY MEXICAN PARROT.

POOR crooning thing! as thou dost sit
Wrapt in thy moody musing-fit,
Heeding my presence not a whit,
 My sympathy,
Touched by such mute appeals to it,
 Is moved for thee.

What ails thee that thou wilt not speak,
Nor take a crumb within thy beak,
Nor let me stroke thy plumage sleek?
 And what is meant
By that strange, melancholy shriek
 Of discontent?

Perhaps thy thought—if thought thou hast—
On airy pinion free and fast,

Has borne thee back amidst the past,
And on thy sight
Breaks, dreamlike, all too sweet to last,
Thy lost delight.

Thy home before thee may arise
Far under equatorial skies,
When thou, unwatched by human eyes,
Didst prate away,
Amidst thy kindred's answering cries,
The tropic day.

Or thou art homesick, and thy ear
Pines for the rolling of the clear
Castilian thou wert wont to hear,
So said, so sung,
That Anglo-Saxon must appear
A barbarous tongue.

But, be the matter what it may,
Forego these sullen moods, I pray,
And crow and chatter all the day
As parrot should:
Nursing thy fancies in this way
Will do no good.

What exile ever so caressed ?
What captive with such luxuries blessed ?
So be content, and manifest
 In right degree,
That cheerfulness which is the best
 Philosophy.

THE SPHINX.

WHAT does it mean with its stony stare,
Fronting the daily sunrise there,
Out in the lonely desert-land,
Sunk in the drifts of yellow sand,
Watching the ages gliding by
With its serene and tranquil eye,
Even as Pharaoh saw them so,
Over three thousand years ago?

Think you the makers meant to trace
God in that grand colossal face?
Could they have hewn those features strange,
Token of Him who knows no change?
Did they conceive a god could dwell
Prisoned in granite?—Who can tell?

Can it be hoarding the secret hid
Under yon towering pyramid?

Can it be waiting until we spell
Out the old riddle of which they tell?
Or are the lips, so stony-stiff,
Holding the key of the hieroglyph?
What *is* the Sphinx? I wish I knew
Something about it.—Child, don't *you*?

THE YOUNG RULER.

HE had riches and ease and honor,
And never a Jewish boy
Had passed on the banks of the Jordan
A childhood of purer joy.

He had houses and fields and vineyards,
And blessings of all degree;
None had a fairer portion
In beautiful Galilee.

Whatever this world could offer
Of pure and innocent bliss,
Whatever his nature needed
Of goodliest gifts, was his.

He had felt no weary longings,
No wants that were unsupplied;
Upright, and just, and noble,
His spirit was satisfied.

Only one thought had power
Even a cloud to cast:
Joy, to be wholly perfect,
Must be a joy *to last*;

And he knew that his own was fleeting;
For he read in the sacred Psalm,
That man must fade as a flower,
And it sometimes marred his calm.

He turned to the holy Prophets,
Security thence to draw;
He listened to Moses' teachings,
And he strove to keep the Law;

He tithed his anise and cummin,
He tithed his mint and rue:
He *knew* he had earth's best treasures,
But he longed for heaven's too.

In the mart of a busy city,
It came to pass, one day,
That a throng of curious people
Were choking the narrow way;

All pressing with upturned faces,
Eager to hear and see
The miracle-working Rabbi
Who had come to Galilee.

—“Now, verily, what will it profit
A man, though he gain the whole
Of the world, with its utmost glory,
If yet he should lose his soul?

“Come unto me, ye weary—”
It dropped on the passing ear
Of the young and happy ruler,
For he could not choose but hear.

He did not pause to listen
As he skirted the crowd, but went
Homeward athwart the city,
Wrapped in his sweet content.

Yet ever and oft the Teacher
Rose to his inward eye;
Over and over the question
Waited his heart’s reply.

Bliss that should be eternal,
Pleasures that could not cloy,—
These were the very blessings
Needed to crown his joy.

Again through the palm-girt highways,
When noontide's sultry flame
Was searing the happy vineyards,
The wonderful Teacher came.

And the ruler hailed his coming;
For harvest or vintage cheer
Never had silenced the question
That troubled his restless ear.

Hastening, he sought the Prophet
Whose words had wrought the strife:
“What shall I do, good Master,
To inherit eternal life?”

As he kneeled, so young and guileless,—
Single in aim and art,—
Jesus, beholding him, loved him,
Though he read his inmost heart;

And he answered and said, as gently
As father would say to son:
“Thou knowest the Ten Commandments?”
And he spake them one by one.

A look that was half reproachful
The eye of the Saviour met:
—“All these I have kept from my childhood;
Good Master, what lack I yet?”

And Jesus, beholding him, loved him,
And a human sympathy stole,
As he gazed on the earnest pleader,
Deep into his sacred soul.

Never diviner pity
Melted the mournful eye,
Never a tenderer yearning,
Than softened the firm reply:

“Only one thing thou lackest;
Forego thy heritage here—
All of thy stored abundance,
Everything heart holds dear;

“ Choose thee between the blessings—
This or the life to be—
Thou shalt have treasure in heaven
If thou wilt follow me.”

A sudden surprised dejection
Flooded the lifted face ;
Doubting and disappointment
Darkened the wistful gaze.

Verily, this was a doctrine
Hard for the flesh, and sore ;
This was a self-denying
Never conceived before.

Had there been half required,
Then he might heed the call :
Dignities, loves, possessions—
How could he yield them all ?

Bitter the stern exaction
Fell on his heart that day ;
And, wavering,—wishing,—choosing,—
He sorrowfully went away.

Ye who have read and marveled
That Jesus, who loved him, yet
Should let him depart, nor hinder
The choice he had clearly set,—

Choose, as each earnest seeker
Who findeth him truly, doth,
Earthly or heavenly treasure—
For ye cannot inherit both.

Ye may be near the kingdom—
Nearer than any know—
And Jesus may love and pity,
And yet, *he may let you go.*

THE LEOPARD-CUBS.

OUT in the offing lay the ship, one tropic
summer day,
That was to bear the teacher home—three thou-
sand miles away—
And, gathered for a last farewell, around him
pressed a crowd
Of dusky followers, on the beach, who wept and
sobbed aloud.

Upon the surf the native boat, waiting to waft
him o'er
The white-capped breakers, churned and chafed
against the pebbly shore.
His soul was sad with toil and pain, so lately had
he won
From rites of fetich savagery these children of
the sun.

But soon the last good-bye was said, for he must
be afloat,

And with a prayer upon his lips he stepped into
the boat;

And, stopping, heard a cry, and saw come rush-
ing o'er the sand

A lad who held a leopard-cub aloft in either
hand :

“Mas’ Teacher, take de boy along! De pups dey
no shall bite;

Me keep him in me bosom close, an’ watch him
day and night.

Dis eberyting me hab to bring for pay de cap-
tain fee;

Me want to learn big English so, wid you across
de sea!”

Dim-eyed, the teacher left the shore, and o'er
the breakers' swell

He still could see the Grebo lad, as rose the
boat and fell,

Lying in silent, hopeless grief, stretched out upon
the sands,
While in his breast the leopard-cubs nestled and
licked his hands.

THE LEGEND OF ST. GEORGE.

TWAS many and many an age ago
—Who readeth should understand—
That the tale I tell, they say, befell
Afar in an Eastern land.

In the pagan times of old, it happed,
When saintly martyrs died
By flood and flame for the holy name
Of Him who was crucified,

In the oozy depths of a slimy marsh,
Unfathomed, and foul, and deep,
A dragon, whose food was human blood,
His fearful lair did keep.

With terror the frightened folk had fled
For fear of his blasting breath,
Yet day by day they sickened away
In an atmosphere of death.

And day by day that he come not nigh
To poison the city's air,
The lot they drew, and two and two
They gave up their children fair

Wherewith to feed the monster grim,
Till heartening hope did fail,
Till everywhere there was wild despair,
And the streets were filled with wail.

At length on the king's one daughter dear
The terrible lot did fall,
And he offered gold and treasures untold,
Rank, glory and honors—all—

To buy her life: but they said him: “Nay,
Through thy command alone,
Each day a twain of *ours* are slain,
And darest thou grudge thine *own?*”

Then the Princess fell at the royal feet
Like a hunted and wet-winged dove:
—“My father, shall I forbear to die
For the sake of the land I love?”

So, all in her richest robes bedight,
'Mid the sobs of women and men,
With a bosom that shook, her course she took
To the horrible dragon's den.

As, weeping, her piteous doom she neared,
It chanced that a Christian knight
Did fare that way on his steed of gray,
And he paused at the rueful sight:

“O sorrowful maiden, whence thy tears?
And whitherward dost thou go?”
And, all dismayed, his steps she stayed
With the story of her woe.

“God see and save,” now cried the knight,
“While I thy helper be!
For the name of Christ hath ever sufficed
To bid all evil flee.”

To the dragon's lair forthwith he spurred,
And therein the monster found,
And with sudden advance he plunged his lance,
And fastened him to the ground:

“ Bring hither thy girdle, O Princess fair,
To bind, withal, his strength ;”
And the maiden she brought it, golden-wrought,
And, knotting its sleaven length,

Therewith he circled its steely scales,
And in her quivering hand
He laid the noose, soft-drawn and loose,
Then gave her a quick command

To utter the sacred name of Christ,—
And she spake it in faith and grief;
And for ever away, did flee that day,
Her heathenish unbelief.

Then slowly she to the city-gates
The slimy horror drew,
And the king and his men took heart again,
And the dragon there they slew.

Henceforward the name that the good St. George
Thus taught them to adore,
Through all their days, with heartiest praise,
They worshiped for evermore.

THE LITTLE PILGRIMS.

WITH A PICTURE.

SOILED with the dust of travel,
Weary with wandering late,
Two little lagging pilgrims
Paused at the castle-gate.

Sorely their feet had stumbled,
Often they'd gone astray
After the fruits and blossoms
Scattered along their way;

Many an hour they'd loitered
Carelessly on ; yet who,
Seeing the path was rugged,
Would not have loitered too ?

Never a hand to check them,
Never a smile to cheer ;

Shadowy memories only
Filling the childish ear.

Once, as they idly dallied,
Scallop and staff thrown by,
Over them dropt a whisper
Out of the silent sky.

Up from their play they started,
Wetted in haste their lips,
Girded themselves for travel,
Shouldered their scanty scrips,

Speeding, as if belated,
Hurriedly on their way,
Softly the younger asking,
“What did our mother say?”

“‘Knock, and it shall be opened.’
Ah! if the whisper stirs
Both of our hearts so, surely—
Surely the voice *was* hers!

“ Cannot you mind her saying,—
Stretching her arms to go,—
‘ I will be with you nearer,
Oftener, than you know ?

“ “ Out of the skies I’ll call you,
Tenderly leaning through.
Listen, with faces, darlings,
Lifted toward the blue.

“ “ “ *Knock, and it shall be opened,*”
Seek, and I know you’ll find,—
These are the words I’ll whisper
When you are left behind.’

“ So I have heard her, brother,
When we have tarried late,
Calling us ‘ little pilgrims,’
Bidding us seek the gate,

“ Telling us ‘tis the pathway
Out of this world of sin.
Yonder I see the wicket :
Come ! let us enter in.”

BABY-FAITH.

O H, beautiful faith of childhood ! How
It beamed to-night on the upturned brow
Of the little kneeler, who bent to say
Her prayers, in her innocent, dreamy way !

“ And doesn’t my darling ” (soft I said
As I pressed my lips to the flossy head)
“ Long to be good, and by and by
Go to a home in the happy sky,
Away and away above yon star,
Where all of the sweet child-angels are ? ”

She lifted her drowsed and sleep-dewed eyes,
And I saw a ripple of trouble rise,
That shimmered across their haze of blue
And kept the gladness from breaking through.

“ I think—I would like to go,”—she said,
Yet doubtingly dropped her silken head

And clasped my hands in her fingers small;
“But then—I’m afraid that I might fall
Out of the moon!”

Her baby-eye
Saw only an opening in the sky—
A radiant oriel whence the light
Of heaven streamed wide athwart the night;
Where the angels lean, as they come and go,
•Agaze at our world so far below.

She mused a moment in pretty thought;
Then suddenly every feature caught
A glad, rare sparkle, and I could trace
The dawn of the trust that flashed her face:
“But God is good; he will understand
That I am afraid, and he’ll take my hand
And lead me in at the shining door,
And then I shall be afraid no more!”

THE LITTLE COMMENTATOR.

GEORGIE, my seven-year-old,
Was reading one day to me
That sweetest of stories ever told,
As he stood beside my knee—

The story of Jacob's sons,
Of Joseph, his father's joy,
And of all the cruel, wicked ones,
And the motherless youngest boy.

As he threaded the touching tale
His wrath arose, and he said,
“If I had been there at Joseph's sale,
I'd punched old Reuben's head!”

When he read how they found the cup
In Benjamin's sack, his fair
Face flushed, and he doubled his small fist up:
“The sneaks! *They* had put it there.”

And when they confessed their sin
With weeping, he sneered “ Ah, hem !
I wonder if Joseph was taken in
By crocodile-tears like *them* ?”

When he read of the long array
Of wagons to Jacob sent—
Of the counsel to “ fall not out by the way”—
I questioned him what that meant.

I saw in his critic eye
A filial attempt to force
Down disdain at the question : “ Why,
Fall out of the wagons, of course ! ”

NUTTING.

WE've all been a-nutting to-day ; we have had
Such honest enjoyment, so simple, so glad,
So brimful of pleasure, so home-sweet, so bright,
Would you like me to tell you about it to-night ?

The day was delicious—half sunny, half sober,
Just one of the goldenest days of October ;
The mountains were wrapped like an Orient queen
In an India mantle of scarlet and green ;
All Nature was draped in her richest and best :
I never have seen her more gorgeously dressed.

Beyond the old mill, at the bend of the road,
Our carriage unburdened its frolicsome load ;
There the nuts that we sought in abundance were
found,
In their *noli-me-tangere* burrs strewn around.

In our drive we had talked of the skies and the air ;
We had feasted on autumn-hues, changeful and fair ;
We had breathed the rich odors of forest and hill,
And of balm and of beauty had drunken our fill—
Had each one said something quite witty to utter,
And now we were ready for—biscuits and butter.

The cloth being laid, it was spread in a trice
From baskets full-burdened with everything nice—
Cream, luscious and yellow ; brown coffee as rare
As the daintiest Frenchman could wish for, was there ;
Broiled chicken as tender and toothsome as tho'
Diana had even made game with her bow ;
And butter as golden—as golden—I pause
To think of a figure to fill up the clause—
Well, we'll say, as the Fleece of the Argonauts
was ;
And bacon,—Lord Verulam, grand epicure,

Would have vowed it suggestive of *Greece*, I am sure!

Then the fair wheaten rolls,—why, they melted away

As snow melts at noon on a warm winter day;
So that Harry had none, as it chanced to befall,
To eat with his sixth cup of coffee, at all.

Our dessert was wholly Arcadian; our table Showed apples as fragrant as those of the fable Of Hesperus (pardon my pen; it employs These classic allusions for sake of the boys); While the chestnuts we gathered, well stript of their skin

And roasted, gave out their sweets hidden within.

When dinner was over we called “Uncle Ben,”
And he and his axe went to hewing again;
Crack, crack! came the tree: “All children from under!”

And it crashed down its way with a boom as of thunder.

Down, down rained the chestnuts—a ravishing sight

That made all the little ones scream with delight.

Our fingers were pricked, but no matter for them :
Was there ever a rose with no thorn on the stem ?
We trod out the burrs amid frolic and fun,
And the woods rang with merriment till we were
done.

When the future comes, bringing us sorrow and
joy,
When the child of to-day is no longer a boy,
When the girls at my elbow are youthful no more,
And the beautiful dreams they're dreaming are
o'er,—
We'll store with our pleasantest reliques away
How happy we all were a-nutting to-day.

THE END.

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